

What Makes a Reimbursable Lunch?



Portland pizza with garden herbs alongside other meal components.

The basic formula requires that five meal components are offered— milk, fruit, vegetable, meat (or an approved meat alternate like beans, yogurt or cheese), and grain. For a meal to be reimbursable, students must choose three full portions of the five, with at least one choice being a fruit or vegetable.

Schools also must also ensure that components meet age-specific caloric minimums and maximums (i.e., grades K-5, 6-8 and 9-12) and that, over the course of a week, offered vegetables and fruits come from different "color" and other categories. At least half of grains must be whole and the amount of meat or meat alternative should be the size of the palm of a child's hand.. Milk must be nonfat or 1 percent and only nonfat milk can be flavored.

For example, "a student might choose an appropriately portioned and constructed chicken sandwich—which counts as a meat and grain—and a whole apple as a reimbursable meal," explains Whitney Ellersick, MS, RD, Nutrition Services Senior Program Manager, Portland Public Schools (PPS).

"If a student chooses only the sandwich and milk, this would not be a reimbursable meal until the student also selects at least a half cup of a fruit or vegetable. This is consistent for all grade levels, but students in 9-12th grades are offered larger servings of grains, meat/meat alternate, fruit and vegetables."

Source URL: <http://food-management.com/k-12-schools/what-makes-reimbursable-lunch>